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CAPITAL PROJECTS



CARING FOR YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE TO KEEP KIRKLAND HEALTHY, SAFE AND VIBRANT



A CYCLIST heads north on Juanita Drive March 14, 2016, along Big Finn Hill Park, where the Juanita Drive Quick Wins project team discusses a connection for the trail south of Northeast 138th Street. The crossing is part of the Juanita Drive Quick Wins project.

WIN TIME ON JUANITA DRIVE

Kirkland is beginning a \$1.3 million redesign of the Juanita Drive corridor.

The vision for Juanita Drive emerged one insight at a time throughout 2012 and 2013, when the City of Kirkland engaged with consultants and stakeholders to study the 3.3-mile-long corridor. Residents scrawled that solution across poster-sized maps of Juanita Drive. They wrote it on sticky notes and spoke it into microphones.

To make Juanita Drive safer for driving, bike riding and walking, the City of

Kirkland—its new owner—would have to improve it in 32 ways, from retiming its traffic signals and adding left-turn pockets to creating a separated bike and pedestrian trail and widening the roadway.

Combined, these projects would cost between \$19 and \$26 million. Neither the City of Kirkland nor any of its funding partners had that kind of money for Juanita Drive. At least not for a decade or two anyway.

TO LEARN MORE

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■ Or [www.kirklandwa.gov/
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ANDREA CLINKSCALES, a principal planner for the Cascade Bicycle Club, discusses possible strategies to connect the trails at Big Finn Hill Park with Pertee Project Engineer Mike Hendrix on a March 14 site visit.

“The days of the big, multi-million-dollar capital project, you just don’t see those too often any more,” says Jon Pascal, a leader in the Finn Hill Neighborhood Alliance and a principal engineer at Transpo Group. “They are few and far between. Local agencies just don’t have resources to do those [big projects] all at once.”

Unfortunately, the residents who live along Juanita Drive and the 17,000 commuters who drive along it can’t wait a decade for a solution.

Cars crash 36 times a year on average along Juanita Drive—that’s three every month.

The culprits are plenty, according to the Juanita Drive Corridor Study. Juanita Drive is dark. It winds sharply around blind corners that conceal oncoming vehicles. Parked cars line its shoulders, obstructing the sightlines of residents who descend their driveways directly onto the street. Speeding is common.

Compelled by this knowledge and a determination to

transform the study into tangible safety, Pascal offered a suggestion in a 2013 advisory group meeting to his fellow advisory group members.

What if, he said, the project team’s staff could identify a short list of projects that Kirkland could implement now.

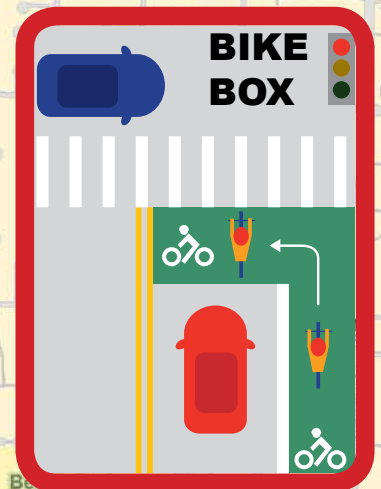
“I’ve been involved in other communities where I’ve seen similar studies prepared and they’ve identified some immediate improvements without a sizeable investment,” Pascal says. “I’ve seen success from that. It provides momentum.”

The project team immediately focused on creating that list.

“We asked ourselves, ‘What things could we do?’ said Kurt Ahrensfield, Kirkland’s consulting project manager for the Juanita Drive Corridor Study. “We knew we couldn’t include anything that had environmental or right-of-way. Both of those elements take time.”

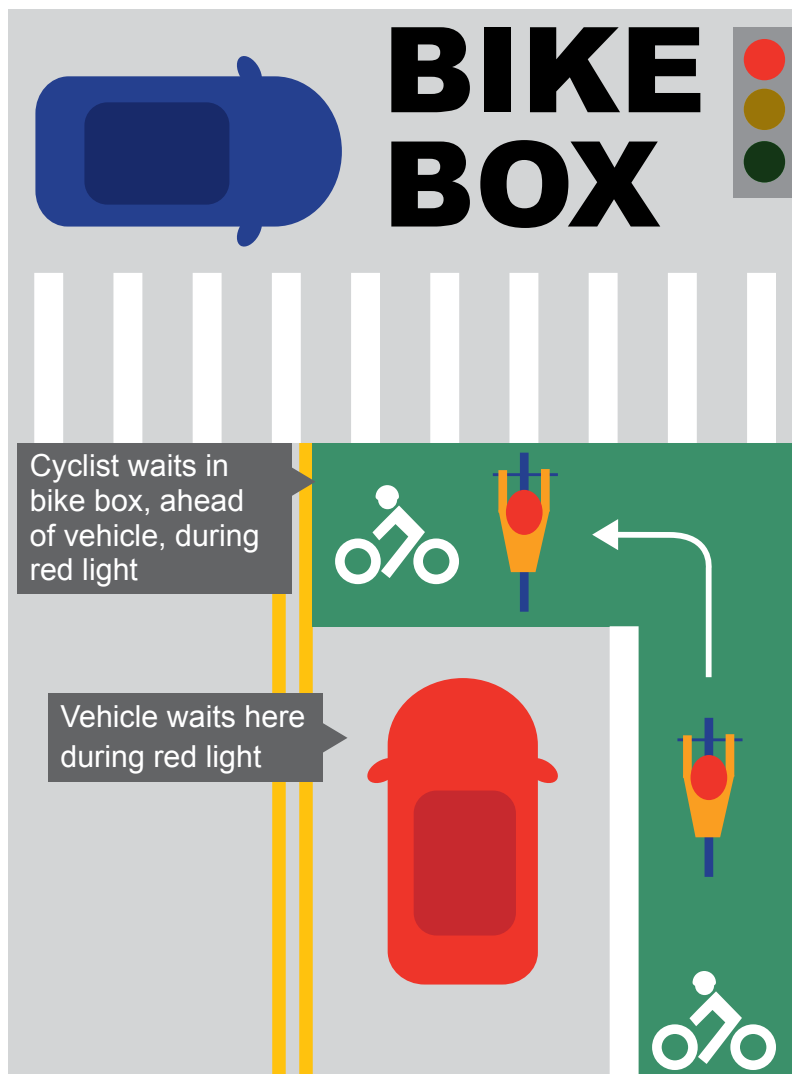
quick WINS

With the help of a \$1.3 million grant, Kirkland will begin implementing the Juanita Drive Quick Wins project. This map details this project.



LEGEND

- Crosswalk w/RFBs
- Left-turn merge pocket
- Street lighting
- City boundary
- Guide posts (TBD)
- Trail
- Northbound bike/pedestrian lane
- Bike box & sidewalk widening
- Center median rumble strips (TBD)



THE PROJECT includes a bike box at Northeast 116th Street and Juanita Drive. Bike boxes improve safety for cycling by improving visibility and helping the cyclist get through the intersection faster.

None of the improvements they chose cost more than \$400,000. Most of them cost less than \$100,000. All of them would make walking, bicycling or driving safer.

The advisory group agreed with the list. And, on the last day of 2014, the Washington State Department of Transportation sent an official endorsement of a \$1.3 million grant to the City of Kirkland, announcing that the state agreed with the list as well.

Troubled crossing

One of the highest priority projects is the trail crossing from one side of Big Finn Hill Park to the other, just south of Northeast 138th Place. To get to the other side, cyclists, trailrunners, hikers and dog-walkers must cross Juanita Drive, where no crosswalk exists and where two blind corners—one on the north, the other to the south—obscures them from drivers.

Finn Hill resident Mel Soares, 42, rides those trails weekly with his 9-year-old son. The crossing gives him two choices: detour nearly a half-mile uphill along Juanita Drive's shoulder and cross at the Northeast 141st Street intersection, near QFC. Or, he and his son can dismount their bikes and wait for an opening to dart across.

"It's pretty dicey," Soares says. "Especially going west across the road because you're going uphill."

The Quick Wins solution here is to install a system of rapid flashing beacons. Rapid flashing beacons halt 88 to 94 percent of all automobiles, according to a Federal Highway Administration study on them.

The Quick Wins project include two other rapid flashing beacons: one at Northeast 143rd Street; the other at 93rd Avenue Northeast, on the west end of Juanita Beach Park.

The project includes a left-turn refuge pocket at Northeast 138th Place that will improve drivers' light-of-sight by allowing them to transition onto Juanita Drive in two stages—the first stage taking them from eastbound Northeast 138th Place to a planned refuge pocket on Juanita Drive; the second stage merging them from the refuge pocket onto Juanita Drive's northbound travel lane,

On Northeast 122nd Place, where a strip of gas stations and local businesses serve the community, the project will add street lighting to what is a now a very dark street.

At the intersection of 98th Avenue Northeast and Northeast 116th Street, the project will create the city's first bike box—an intersection design that increases cyclists' visibility and gives them a head-start on cars so they can get to the bike lanes before cars start passing them.

And along the entire corridor, the Quick Wins project will create a shared bicycle and pedestrian lane with a two-foot buffer.

This shared lane will run from south to north, uphill and it'll be protected at the sharpest corners.

"People want to see a lot changed with Juanita Drive," Pascal says. "While these improvements don't address the majority of concerns, I do think they start to redefine the characteristics of the corridor. Instead of it being primarily car-centric, we will start to see infrastructure that promotes safe crossings and safe biking. Is this the end? No. It's just the beginning." ■